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THE FATE OF SEBASTIA  
IN THE AFTERMATH OF GENOCIDE

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The Mudros Armistice on October 30, 1918, formalized the surrender of the Ottoman Empire to the Allied Powers, opening new vistas for all its constituent peoples. For the Armenians, a time of national revival after years of torment and sacrifice seemed to be at hand. The horrendous persecutions by the Young Turk regime had received worldwide condemnation, combined with pledges to punish the perpetrators and to rehabilitate the survivors. The Armenian homelands, it had been proclaimed by the Allied Powers, would be guaranteed against the repetition of such crimes against humanity.<sup>1</sup> Declarations of this kind, together with the established practice of the defeated side in war having to pay a heavy price, fired Armenian imaginations with the vision of a reconstituted state encompassing the realms of historic Armenian kingdoms, lands that long ago had fallen under Turkish, Persian, and Russian rule.

The *vilayet* of Sivas (Armenian: Sebastia/Sepastia; Greek: Sebasteia) lay in historic Lesser Armenia (Pokr Hayk) and constituted one of the six eastern Ottoman provinces that were collectively called Turkish (Western) Armenia. In the nineteenth century, Sebastia had become a center of American missionary-educational endeavors, which in turn spurred Armenian cultural, intellectual, and political movements. The Genocide of 1915 devastated the *vilayet* from its western reaches at Marsovan,

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<sup>1</sup> For representative statements by Allied leaders, see Richard G. Hovannisian, "The Allies and Armenia, 1915-18," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3:1 (Jan. 1968): 147-51.

Amasia, and Zile to its northern highlands in the Pontic range, its eastern districts of Zara, Sushehri (Enderes), and Shabin-Karahisar, and its southern expanses around Divrig, Gurun, Darende, and Gemerek. A small segment of the population managed to survive through religious conversion or by fleeing to mountain fastnesses where some were able to maintain a precarious existence until the end of the war.<sup>2</sup>

The collapse of the Young Turk regime seemed to open the way for thousands of deported survivors scattered over a broad area from Urfa and Aleppo to the Syrian desert to return to reclaim their goods and properties. Moreover, the prospect of the Armenian provinces being detached from the Ottoman Empire and placed under Western protection was now a distinct possibility. There were, of course, the disturbing shadows cast by the secret wartime accords of the Entente Powers—Great Britain, France, Russia—regarding the partition of the Ottoman Empire. According to the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, the Armenian provinces were to be divided: Van, Bitlis, Erzerum, and Trebizond were set aside for Russian control, whereas the triangle of Sivas, Kharpert (Harput; Mamuret ul-Aziz), and Caesarea, together with the region of Cilicia, was included in the French zone. British rewards lay farther south in the Kurdish and Arab regions.<sup>3</sup> After the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in November 1917, the newly-established Soviet government exposed and repudiated those agreements. As the victorious Allies gathered in Paris at the beginning of 1919 to impose heavy terms of peace on the German Empire and its wartime partners, Great Britain and France let it be known that the secret agreements were no longer necessarily binding in all details, but it remained to be seen if they were actually prepared to give up

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<sup>2</sup> See Arakel N. Patrik, *Patmagirk-hushamatian Sebasioty ev gavari hayutian* [title page in English, *History of the Armenians of Sebastia and Neighboring Villages*], vol. 2 (New York: Pan-Sebastia Rehabilitation Union, 1983), pp. 4-38.

<sup>3</sup> For the secret agreements, see Harry N. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey: A Diplomatic History, 1919-1923* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1931); Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del SSSR, *Razdel Aziatskoi Turtsii po sekretnym dokumentam b. ministerstva inostrannykh del* [Partition of Asiatic Turkey according to the Secret Documents of the (Former) Ministry of Foreign Affairs], ed. E.A. Adamov (Moscow: Izdanie Litizdata NKID, 1924).

the spoils that they had apportioned to themselves. Such concerns aside, in the weeks following the end of the Turkish surrender it was difficult to dampen Armenian optimism about impending rewards for such great sacrifices.

### *Sivas after World War I and Armenian Claims*

When the Turkish government capitulated at the end of 1918, several thousand Armenian women and children in Sivas province were languishing in Muslim households. During the deportations in 1915, American missionary-educator Mary Louise Graffam had tried unsuccessfully to protect her wards in the Sivas Girls' School by marching with them as far as Malatia, but she had then been prevented from going any farther. Returning to Sivas, Graffam gathered and cared for some waifs in a makeshift orphanage, refusing to leave her work even after the rupture of U.S.-Ottoman relations in April 1917.<sup>4</sup> Now, after the Allied victory, Armenians began to come out of their hiding places, while others who had survived the death marches started to reappear to reclaim their homes and properties. Armenian church services resumed and the nearby Monastery of Surb Nshan once again opened its doors to pilgrims. By early 1919, it was estimated that 2,000 Armenians had returned to Sivas and the figure grew to 10,000 by midyear, although more than 7,000 of these were natives of other districts who were awaiting the opportunity to proceed to their homes. Armenian leaders tried to salvage as many persons as possible by gathering orphans in the Aramian School. School-age children were later transferred to the American hillside orphanages under the direction of Graffam and her brother-in-law, Reverend Ernest C. Partridge. By 1920, the number of institutionalized orphans in Sivas rose to about 1,200 boys and girls.<sup>5</sup>

Soon after the end of the war, an American fact-finding mission made up of missionary-relief personnel arrived in Constan-

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<sup>4</sup> See Mary Graffam, "On the Road with Exiled Armenians," *Missionary Herald* (Dec. 1915): 565-68. On Mary Louise Graffam, see the chapter by Helen Sahagian in this volume.

<sup>5</sup> Patrik, *Patmagirk-hushamatian Sebastioy*, pp. 38-48.

tinople with the first shipload of relief supplies. Field teams sent to the interior provinces returned with reports of appalling devastation. It was decided to concentrate relief efforts in areas of Asia Minor (Anatolia) up to Sivas, Kharpert, and Diarbekir, as there were virtually no Armenians left farther east in places like Erzerum, Bitlis, and Van.<sup>6</sup> The American Committee for Relief in the Near East (ACRNE) and its successor Near East Relief (NER) dispatched a part of their supplies to Sivas, which became an important American operational center. There were eventually seventeen American relief workers in Sivas headed by Partridge, Graffam, and Nina Rice. Aside from caring for the orphans, women rescued from Muslim households, and "child brides" who had been abducted during the deportations, the Americans and their Armenian assistants operated schools and workshops that emphasized vocational education in order to give the survivors practical training and skills to become self-sufficient as quickly as possible.<sup>7</sup> Other American relief workers set up offices in Marsovan and elsewhere in the province.

The decimation of the Armenian population of Sebastia might be thought to have weakened the case for including the province in a future Armenian state, yet there were also strong moral arguments that could be posed in favor of just such an outcome. It was up to Armenian spokesmen to persuade the victorious Allied Powers of the validity of their claims. During the final months of World War I, through a complex series of developments, a small, landlocked Armenian republic had been formed around Erevan on a part of Russian (Eastern) Armenia. Although virtually no one at the time could appreciate its historic significance, the Erevan or "Araratic" republic laid the foundation for the only Armenian state that has continued to exist. In the circumstances of 1918, it was regarded as little more than a rump state that had been thrust upon Armenians by the cruel blows of genocide in the Ottoman Empire and revolutions

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<sup>6</sup> James L. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930)* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), pp. 112-16; United States, National Archives, Record Group 256, Records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, 867B.00/10 and 867B.00/54/134/146.

<sup>7</sup> RG 256, 184.021/96.

and civil war in the Russian Empire.<sup>8</sup>

The subsequent victory of the Allied Powers was to change that perception. It now seemed that the Republic might serve as the nucleus for a much enlarged Armenia that would encompass both the Russian Armenian and the Turkish Armenian provinces with one outlet on the Black Sea and another on the Mediterranean Sea through Cilicia, the site of the last medieval Armenian kingdom. In selecting its delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, the Armenian legislature debated long and hard on what Avetis Aharonian should claim on behalf of the Armenian nation. In the end, the formula adopted in Erevan was unification of the Russian Armenian territories in the Caucasus and the six Turkish Armenian provinces, Sivas included, with an outlet on the Black Sea. Once Aharonian had arrived in Paris, however, he was carried away by the optimism and insistence of Boghos Nubar Pasha and other Western Armenian spokesmen, who maintained that the Allied Powers were obliged and willing to award to Armenia not only the six provinces but also Cilicia and the territorial corridor over Caesarea linking the two areas.<sup>9</sup>

### *Projections for Peace*

Soon after the Paris Peace Conference convened in January 1919, Boghos Nubar and Avetis Aharonian presented the Armenian case in a joint memorandum and then appeared before the Allied heads of state to reinforce the call for a resurrected Armenia stretching from the southern Caucasus and Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Historic, economic, and strategic arguments were used to justify these bounds. The pair added the moral argument, repeated many times thereafter, that the voices of all Armenians, whether living or killed by the Young Turk regime, should be counted in determining the borders.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).

<sup>9</sup> Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, 4 vols. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1971-1996), vol. 1, pp. 251-60.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 277-81; Republic of Armenia, Delegation to the Peace Conference, File 104a/3a, *H.H. Patvirakutun, 1919 t.: Hashtutian Konferens* [Republic] of

The maximalist claims to an Armenia from sea to sea were scoffed at in the Parisian newspaper *Le Temps*<sup>11</sup> and in certain Allied political and commercial circles. In retrospect, the Armenian pretensions seem to have been entirely out of touch with reality, yet study of the public declarations of Allied leaders and the secret American and British plans for peace reveals that in fact the Armenian claims were not beyond the realm of possibility. In the United States, the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia (ACIA), with a membership made up of bipartisan Congressional leaders, more than twenty state governors, and powerful religious, industrial, and philanthropic figures, demanded the unification of all these territories into an Armenian state forever freed from Turkish rule. The Armenian people should be given their own lands, "devastated and depopulated though they may be," inclusive of Cilicia and the Turkish Armenian provinces.<sup>12</sup>

Aside from public declarations by the pro-Armenian lobby, secret U.S. plans for peace indicated that Armenia warranted special consideration. Shortly after the United States entered World War I in April 1917, the administration of Woodrow Wilson began planning for the peace through a body named the "Inquiry." As early as December 1917 the Inquiry recommended: "It is necessary to free the subject races of the Turkish Empire from oppression and misrule. This implies at the very least autonomy for Armenia and the protection of Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia and Arabia by the civilized nations."<sup>13</sup> The twelfth of President Wilson's widely-proclaimed Fourteen Points for peace in January 1918 called for the "absolutely unmolested development"

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A(rmenia) Delegation, 1919: Peace Conference] The delegation's archives, now housed in Watertown, Massachusetts, are cited as Rep. of Arm. Del. Archives).

<sup>11</sup> "L'Empire Arménien," *Le Temps*, Feb. 28, 1919, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> On the activities of the ACIA, see *A Report of Activities: The American Committee for the Independence of Armenia, 1918-1922* (New York: ACIA, 1922); Gregory L. Aftandilian, *Armenia, Vision of a Republic: The Independence Lobby in America, 1918-1927* (Boston: Charles River Books, 1981).

<sup>13</sup> United States, Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Policy of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference*, 13 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942-1947), vol. 1, p. 52 (series cited hereafter as *Paris Peace Conference*).

of the subject nationalities of the Ottoman Empire. A commentary on the Fourteen Points by U.S. advisers specified: "Armenia must be given a port on the Mediterranean and a protecting power established."<sup>14</sup> At the Paris Peace Conference, the Inquiry was reorganized as the American delegation's Department of Territorial, Economic, and Political Intelligence. That department's initial recommendations included the unification of the Armenian lands of the Russian and Turkish empires and the formation of a residual Turkish state in Anatolia that would extend no farther east than the Anti-Taurus Mountains. The boundaries of the Armenian state, it was argued, were clearly fixed by nature, being the Anti-Taurus range in the west and the Taurus Mountains in the south. Thus, Armenia should encompass Cilicia and the six Turkish Armenian provinces except for districts west of the Anti-Taurus and south of the Taurus. Of course, there were difficulties with this plan, since the Armenian element did not constitute a majority in that expanse. However, with the repatriation of survivors and the immigration of great numbers of diasporan Armenians, together with the anticipated outflow of a large segment of the Muslim population, the Armenians would soon achieve a majority. In any case, the principle of majority rule should not strictly apply in this case because of the conditions under which the Armenian people had lived in the past and the more recent deportations and massacres by the hundreds of thousands.<sup>15</sup>

British public declarations and secret guidelines did not vary significantly from those of the Americans. Already in announcing the British war aims, Prime Minister David Lloyd George had pledged that Armenia would never again be subjected "to the blasting tyranny of the Turk."<sup>16</sup> Assistant Foreign Secretary

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<sup>14</sup> United States, Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918: Supplement 1: The Great War*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1933), vol. 1, p. 412; Charles Seymour, ed., *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 4 vols. (Boston and New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1926-1928), vol. 4, p. 129.

<sup>15</sup> David Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris: With Documents*, 21 vols. (New York: Appeal Printing Co., 1924-1926), vol. 4, pp. 229-30, 254-60.

<sup>16</sup> Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 100 (1917) (London: H.M.S.O., 1917), col. 2220; David Lloyd George,

Robert Cecil added "that we must not allow the misdeeds of the Turks to diminish the patrimony of the Armenians." There should be no division of Armenia and the country should be treated "as a single whole."<sup>17</sup> Among the tentative guidelines for the Turkish settlement, issued in a confidential memorandum of the Foreign Office shortly after the surrender of the Ottoman and German empires, was the formation of an Armenian state in as wide an area as possible. It was to extend westward as far as and including the districts of mixed Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian habitation. Armenian immigration into that area should be facilitated, and the Armenian victims and exiles should be taken into account in all calculations. According to an attached map, the frontiers of Armenia would extend from the Black Sea west of Ordu southward to include most of Sivas/Sebastia province, and pass along the Anti-Taurus Mountains to Cilicia.<sup>18</sup> These recommendations were put before the British War Cabinet's interdepartmental Eastern Committee on December 2, 1918, during which Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon of Kedleston reviewed the dismal record of European involvement in the Armenian Question, stressing that there was now the opportunity to rectify past mistakes by separating Armenia from Turkey.<sup>19</sup>

After the Paris Peace Conference had begun, the British government, on February 7, 1919, reaffirmed its commitment to detach the non-Turkish portions of the Ottoman Empire, as well as those lands where experience had shown that the autonomous development of minorities could not be guaranteed under Turkish rule. This applied to Armenia. There should be a Turkish state in Anatolia up to the point where the solidly Turkish element gave way to mixed Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, and Greek populations. Hence, the north to south Samsun-Caesarea-Selefke line would lie in the new Turkey whereas the Kerasund-Sivas-Mersina line would fall within a separate state, which,

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*War Memoirs*, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1933-1937), vol. 3, p. 64.

<sup>17</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 190 (1918), col. 3268.

<sup>18</sup> Great Britain, Cabinet Office Archives, Cab 27, Cabinet Committees: General Series (1915-1939), vol. 37, E.C. 2525, Nov. 21, 1918.

<sup>19</sup> Cabinet Office Archives, Cab 27, vol. 24, Eastern Committee, 40th Minutes (Annex), Dec. 2, 1918.

taking in Cilicia and most of the six eastern vilayets, would be given its historic name—"Armenia." It was essential for the peace conference to find a mandatory power to assist this state to develop.<sup>20</sup> Throughout 1919, several alternate plans relating to the Near East were adopted by the British cabinet, but in all of these the Armenian boundary continued to run to the west of the city and county (*sanjak*) of Sivas.

Of the Allied Powers, France alone was not supportive of these projections. According to the secret Entente agreements not only Cilicia but much of the vilayets of Sivas, Kharpert, and Caesarea was reserved as a French zone of control. Although the Bolshevik exposure of these accords had forced Georges Clemenceau's government to distance itself from them on an official level, France continued to view the affected territories, along with Greater Syria, as its rightful zone of influence. It would soon become clear, however, that asserting these presumed rights would be far more difficult than the French initially had expected.<sup>21</sup>

### *Emergence of the Turkish Resistance Movement*

Rivalries among the European Allies soon became apparent to all, as Great Britain, France, and Italy tangled over the spoils of war. While the German peace treaty dominated the agenda of the first phase of the Paris Peace Conference until June 1919, the Turkish settlement frequently came up during these proceedings. The indecision of the United States about assuming a share of the postwar responsibilities in the Near East contributed to the long delay in drafting the final Turkish treaty. Instead of the anticipated swift, harsh punishment, Turkish leaders were treated to the spectacle of intense Allied competition and the gradual re-emergence of pro-Turkish sentiments among certain British, French, and Italian imperial and colonial circles. For the Armenians, the implications were extremely worrisome.

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<sup>20</sup> US Archives, RG 256, 185.513/14, and F.W. 867.00/480B. For a similar memorandum, dated February 18, 1919, see Britain, FO 608/83, 342/8/4/7442.

<sup>21</sup> Hovannissian, *Republic of Armenia*, vol. 1, pp. 273-76.

At the war's end, there was great fear among Young Turk functionaries, tribal chieftains, and countless ordinary citizens who had seized Armenian homes and properties that the Allied Powers would occupy the country, arrest and punish those implicated in the Armenian massacres, and force the new owners to relinquish their acquired assets to returning Armenians or to Armenian community institutions. Such anxieties made these elements particularly receptive to early calls for resistance against partition of the Ottoman Empire, especially of the core Turkish homelands that were identified as extending from the European hinterland of Constantinople (Istanbul), across Anatolia, to the former Russo-Turkish boundary in the Caucasus. In the eastern provinces, these elements, with so much to lose, began to coalesce to preserve the territorial integrity of the area. The movement was boosted in May 1919 by the arrival in Erzerum of General Kiazim Karabekir as commander of the XV Army Corps. A veteran of the Caucasian campaigns during the world war, he denounced schemes to form an Armenia extending all the way to Sivas and the Kizil Irmak (Halys River). Karabekir and the local notables deplored the proclivity of officials in Constantinople to make certain territorial concessions to the Armenians and pledged to defend the eastern vilayets against any and all encroachments.<sup>22</sup>

The resistance organization gained greater momentum with the appearance of General Mustafa Kemal Pasha as military inspector of the Ninth Army, which included the III Army Corps at Sivas. As it happened, his departure from Constantinople in mid-May 1919 coincided with the landing of Greek armed forces at Smyrna under the cover of an Allied naval squadron. Disembarking at Samsun, Kemal proceeded to Amasia in the Sivas vilayet where, following a meeting with military and civil authorities on June 21-22, he issued a protocol calling for the creation of a "National Committee" to protect the interests of the homeland in view of the fact that the central government was under Allied surveillance and control. The protocol urged non-compliance with orders to disarm or relin-

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 423-28; Kâzim Karabekir, *İstiklâl Harbimiz* [Our War of Independence] (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayinevi, 1960), pp. 19-45.

quish posts and rejected any form of foreign occupation. A national congress would soon be summoned in Sivas to develop strategies and adopt a platform.<sup>23</sup>

Pending that gathering, Kemal traveled to Erzerum to attend the founding congress of the Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Eastern Vilayets in July. There, he became all the more outspoken regarding the sacred duty to prevent the establishment of Greek and Armenian states on Ottoman territory or, as stated by General Karabekir, to allow the Greeks and Armenians “to clasp one another’s blood-soaked hands across the Kizil Irmak, which they want to turn veritably red with Turkish blood.” The Erzerum congress declared that the natural frontiers of the country included all the eastern provinces and that neither a foreign mandate nor any special privileges to Greeks, Armenians, or other non-Muslim minorities would be tolerated. A “Representative Committee” would coordinate the defense efforts until a broader national meeting could convene at Sivas.<sup>24</sup>

Touted as a grand national assemblage, the Sivas congress (September 4-12, 1919), actually had fewer than twenty-five delegates, nearly all from the eastern provinces. Under Mustafa Kemal’s leadership, the newly-formed Association for the Defense of the Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia (European Turkey) condemned the Greek occupation of Smyrna and the French occupation of parts of Cilicia, the nefarious plan to form an Armenian state right up to Sivas and the Kizil Irmak, and the treachery of the central government in compromising the territorial integrity of the lands that had been under Turkish control at the end of the war—namely, the expanse from Thrace in the west to the former Russo-Turkish boundary in the east. Kemal encouraged the aroused delegates by asserting that the Allied Powers had already given up the idea of creating a separate Armenian state because they saw that the Erevan government

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<sup>23</sup> Hovannissian, *Republic of Armenia*, vol. 1, pp. 429-33; [Mustafa Kemal]. *A Speech Delivered by Ghazi Mustapha Kemal, President of the Turkish Republic, October 1927* (Leipzig: K.F. Koehler, 1929), pp. 24-34.

<sup>24</sup> *Erzurum Kongresi ve Mustafa Kemal Atatürk* (n.p., n.d.); Cevat Dursunoğlu, *Milli mücadelede Erzurum* [Erzurum in the National Struggle] (Ankara: n.p., 1946).

in the Caucasus could not control even the little land under its jurisdiction. Neither foreign occupation nor concessions to Greeks or Armenians would be accepted.<sup>25</sup> A master of propaganda and manipulation, Mustafa Kemal brought the resistance movement under his strong personal control, isolating and suppressing his many adversaries. He soon moved his provisional capital from Sivas to the heart of the Anatolian plain at Angora (Ankara), a central location far removed from cosmopolitan Constantinople and Allied naval vessels and armed forces.

### *The Mandate Issue*

In the weeks before the Paris Peace Conference imposed the crushing Treaty of Versailles on Germany on June 28, 1919, the Turkish settlement and the future of Armenia often surfaced in the deliberations. President Woodrow Wilson repeatedly expressed sympathy for the Armenian people and his hope that the United States would shoulder the mandate for Armenia, yet he evaded a firm commitment by hiding behind the legal argument that Congressional authorization was required. He gave assurances that he would do his utmost to bring the American people around to accepting the Armenian mandate (in which case the borders of the new state might actually reach as far west as Sivas). In fact, however, he did little to promote that cause while waiting for the Senate to ratify the German treaty, which included the League of Nations Covenant and the mechanism for the assignment and administration of mandates.<sup>26</sup>

The issue of an American protectorate over Armenia was all the more complex because of the divergent views regarding the form of such a mandate. The Armenians and their supporters wanted American supervision over a clearly defined national state, whereas many Americans with experience in the Near East argued that a mandate for Armenia could not be successful without also uplifting and providing good government for the surrounding peoples and territories. Hence, if there was to be

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<sup>25</sup> Kemal, *Speech*, pp. 57-133 *passim*; Karabekir, *İstiklâl Harbimiz*, pp. 175-226 *passim*; Vehbi Cem Aşkun, *Sivas Kongresi* (Sivas: Kâmil Matbaası, 1945).

<sup>26</sup> Hovannisian, *Republic of Armenia*, vol. 1, pp. 312-29 *passim*.

an American role, it should be in the form of a joint mandate over Armenia, Anatolia, and the Constantinople-Straits zone until such time as the constituent parts could exist separately in general harmony with each another. Caleb F. Gates, president of Robert College, and Mary Mills Patrick, president of the Constantinople College for Women, drew Armenian ire by calling for a single mandate for the entire region.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, James L. Barton and William W. Peet of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions voiced the sentiment that after all that had happened Armenians could not be expected to live in a common state with their oppressors and murderers. The Armenian territories, they maintained, should be separated immediately and granted independence as soon as possible. Although his position would eventually shift, Barton declared: "This land belongs to the Armenians by right of occupancy for centuries and they now constitute the only people there morally and intellectually capable of self-government and with capacity to develop to the full the resources of the country."<sup>28</sup>

The urgency of decisive action to create a separate Armenian state under foreign protection was reiterated by Armenophile societies in Europe and America. They joined Armenian representatives in drawing attention to the repeated Turkish violations of the Mudros Armistice and to the wretched condition of Armenian survivors and forced converts in districts such as Marsovan, Amasia, Tokat, and Sivas, and even in places much closer to Constantinople. The repatriates were unable to retrieve their homes, goods, and properties, to cultivate their fields, or to reopen their businesses without daily threats of new massacres. The Ottoman government, instead of assisting the victims,

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<sup>27</sup> Caleb F. Gates, *Not to Me Only* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), pp. 252-53; Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), pp. 126-27, 173-74, 181-83. See also US Archives, Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State (Decimal File, 1910-1929), 763.72119/6052, and RG 256, 184/021/106/128, and 867B.00/110.

<sup>28</sup> *New Armenia* 10 (Dec. 1918): 192. See also RG 59, 860J.01/9, and RG 256, 867B.00/134/146; *Missionary Herald* 114 (Oct. 1918): 534-37, and 115 (June and Aug. 1919): 231-35, 331-33.

was fostering the resettlement of Muslims from the Balkans and Kurdish tribes from beyond the Taurus Mountains in the Armenian provinces.<sup>29</sup> On August 23, 1919, the heads of the Apostolic, Catholic, and Protestant Armenian communities in the Ottoman Empire wrote of the survivors in an anguished tone: "Not enough that their property held by the Moslems was not returned to them; not enough that everywhere they were rubbing elbows with the murderers of their brothers, sisters, wives and children, but fate reserved to them the inexpressible pain of beholding their enemies calmly taking possession of all the orphans, widows and girls ravished during the deportations and massacres." The recent repatriates were once again fleeing toward Constantinople; only a quick, forceful peace treaty could save the Armenian people.<sup>30</sup>

This deplorable state of affairs was affirmed by British and French control and relief officers, who reported that Muslim squatters were showing increased resistance to giving up Armenian homes and properties, that numerous officials who were guilty of the Armenian massacres remained at their posts, and that thousands of demobilized but not disarmed Turkish soldiers were joining into lawless bands to terrorize the Christian population. The Armenian quarters of all towns between Samsun and Sivas were in shambles, and Christians everywhere feared new massacres. The misery of the survivors defied adequate description.<sup>31</sup>

### *The King-Crane and Harbord Missions*

As alarming reports were relayed from Constantinople to Paris, two American missions traveled to the Near East to assess the disposition of the local populations and to engage in studies

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, FO 371/3658-3659, 47515/60850/77790/77890/86068/86314/98469/98767/512/58, and FO 371/4157-4158, 64432/105799/115446/521/44; RG 59, 860J.01/56/129/144, and 763.72119/5483; Rep. of Arm. Del. Archives, File 231/130, Memoranda of April 1 and Aug 18, 1919.

<sup>30</sup> RG 59, 867B.00/164. See also FO 608/85, 347/1/8/19449 encl.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, RG 256, 876.00/178; FO 3658-3660, 52430/55143/68108/75891/80086/105792/140460/512/58, and FO 371/4195-4197, File 3349/44 *passim*.

that would be useful for a potential mandatory power. The first of these, the King-Crane commission, grew out of a failed agreement of Great Britain, France, and the United States to participate in a joint investigation of the region. In the end, only the American section, led by Oberlin College president Henry C. King and Woodrow Wilson's industrialist friend Charles R. Crane, set sail. Spending more than two months from June to August 1919 in Constantinople, Palestine, Syria, and Cilicia, the King-Crane commission conferred with American, British, French, Turkish, Arab, Armenian, Greek, Assyrian, and other ethno-religious representatives. After returning to Constantinople from the Arab provinces in late July, King and Crane decided that since every conceivable point of view was available in that cosmopolitan capital, time could be saved by foregoing a personal investigation into Anatolia and the Armenian provinces.<sup>32</sup>

In their testimony before the commission in early August, the heads of the Armenian Apostolic, Catholic, and Protestant communities stressed the need for a quick settlement, reiterating complaints that Armenian survivors were unable to reclaim their properties and were being harassed and threatened with renewed violence, while the Turkish government was directing Kurds and Muslim refugees into the Armenian provinces in an attempt to prevent the creation of a separate Armenian state. Rear Admiral Mark L. Bristol, the U.S. High Commissioner, on the other hand, ridiculed Armenian pretensions and urged the taking of the "big point of view" predicated on the "greatest good" for the "greatest number of people." By contrast, Mary Graffam and President George E. White of Anatolia College at Marsovan joined Consul Bie Ravndal, James Barton, and William Peet in warning that Mustafa Kemal was inciting the Turks to a renewed campaign of "bloodshed, spoliation and warfare" and in insisting that immediate Armenian independence under American sponsorship was imperative.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> For a detailed study of the mission, see Harry N. Howard, *The King-Crane Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East* (Beirut: Khayat, 1963).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 182-88; FO 371/3659, 123851/512/58, and FO 608/78, 342/1/16279; Rep. of Arm Del. Archives, File 231/130, joint memorandum, Aug. 18, 1919.

Although the King-Crane report, which was completed in late August and delivered to the White House in September 1919, concentrated primarily on the future of the Arab provinces, one full section dealt with the non-Arab territories. Recommending the retention of Anatolia as a Turkish homeland, the commission noted that a "proper division" of the remaining area was justified because of the terrible Turkish record of misgovernment and massacres. "These crimes—black as anything in human history—cannot be forgotten and left out of account in seeking a righteous solution of the Turkish problem." Armenia should be separated from Turkey and made into a viable national state. Yet in order to avoid minority Christian rule over a Muslim majority, that state should be limited in size, with its boundary placed approximately at the forward line of the Russian advance in 1916-17, that is, in the four eastern vilayets of Trebizon, Erzerum, Bitlis, and Van. Although the Armenians coveted Sivas, Kharpert, and the territory extending to Cilicia, this area of mixed population should be left with Anatolia. If that arrangement proved unsuccessful, then the question of enlarging Armenia could later be reopened. "All this is argued with the best interest of the Armenians in mind, to give them a real and not an illusory opportunity." Thus, there should be three states: a Constantinople-Straits international zone, Turkish Anatolia, and Armenia, whereas the Kurds might have an autonomous region between Armenia and Mesopotamia. Only the United States, the report concluded, had both the moral fiber and the material resources to assume the responsibility for this broad area. Significantly, nearly a year had passed since the end of the war, and while an American commission was still recommending the formation of a separate Armenian state, it was now being argued that, for the time being at least, Sebastia/Sivas and Kharpert should be excluded.<sup>34</sup>

The second U.S. field mission was dispatched in August 1919, just as King and Crane were writing up their findings. The American Military Mission to Armenia, headed by Major General James G. Harbord, gave President Wilson the opportu-

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<sup>34</sup> *Paris Peace Conference*, vol. 12, pp. 801-48; Howard, *King-Crane*, pp. 232-34.

nity to show that the United States maintained an unflagging interest in the fate of the Armenian people, while also allowing him to put off decisive action. In his instructions to Harbord on August 13, Secretary of State Robert Lansing wrote: "It is desirable that you investigate and report on the political, military, geographic, administrative, economic and such other considerations involved in possible American interests and responsibilities in the region."<sup>35</sup> The fifty-member mission was made up of specialists in commerce and economics, engineering and water resources, communications and transportation, history and geography, military affairs, and other fields that would be of vital importance for any power that might take a supervisory role in the area. Arriving in Constantinople at the beginning of September, the American Military Mission to Armenia spent the next six weeks in an overland trek through Asia Minor and Cilicia to Aleppo, then eastward along the Taurus Mountains to Mardin and Diarbekir, doubling back to Kharpert, Malatia, and Sivas, and then traveling eastward over Erzinjan and Erzerum to beyond the old Russo-Turkish boundary into the Armenian republic, with stops in Kars, Echmiadzin, and Erevan, where lengthy exchanges took place with Prime Minister Alexandre Khatisian and members of his cabinet.<sup>36</sup>

It was on September 20 that the small caravan of Ford automobiles crested the hills overlooking Sivas and entered the city through its tree-lined streets. The Americans were welcomed not only by the appointees of the Constantinople government but also by founders of the Turkish Nationalist movement headed by Mustafa Kemal Pasha. It was clear to General Harbord from the outset that Kemal was in firm control here. Meeting with Harbord that same day, Mustafa Kemal defined the Nationalist movement in Wilsonian terms and discounted rumors that it was associated with the Bolsheviks or Ittihadists (Young Turks). He was gratified that the United States had opposed the secret

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<sup>35</sup> RG 256.184.021/142; Library of Congress, Division of Manuscripts, The Papers of James G. Harbord, vol. 1, p. 69.

<sup>36</sup> The mission's diary, extensive papers, and reports are preserved in RG 256, File 184.021. For a summary of the mission's travels and findings, see Hovannian, *Republic of Armenia*, vol. 2, pp. 334-65.

Entente treaties to partition Turkey and was confident that the Americans would insist on a just settlement. Kemal disclaimed any malice toward the Christian elements and condemned the wartime persecutions, observing that these had been the work of "a small committee which had usurped the government," in contrast with the Greek outrages that were currently occurring at Smyrna under the eyes of the Allied Powers and the excesses of the "Erivan republic," which was attempting to exterminate the local Muslim population. He accused the British of inciting the Armenians and Turks to fight each other in order to have an excuse to seize the entire region.<sup>37</sup>

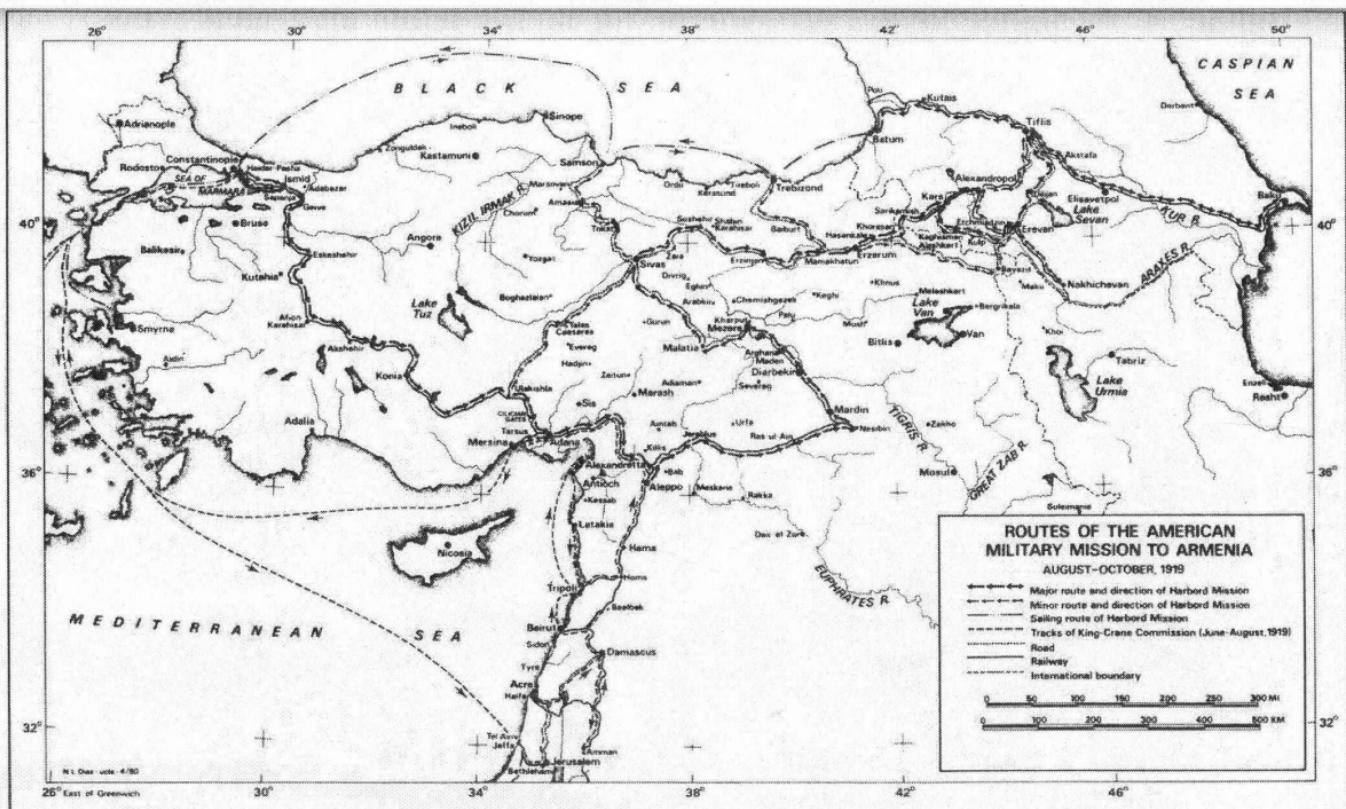
While in Sivas, the Harbord mission stayed in the American compound as the guest of Ernest Partridge and Mary Graffam. Sivas had become one of the easternmost relief stations, where the American and Armenian staff operated orphanages, shelters, and workshops. General Harbord learned that of the nearly 200,000 Armenians in the province before the war, some 10,000 still survived in a servile status. Almost all the Armenians of Sivas itself had been deported, but several thousand others from various places had congregated there. He was especially moved at seeing the 150 young "brides" in the care of Mary Graffam. "Many of these are still no more than children, and the stories of the treatment received by these little girls of tender years would be beyond belief in any other part of the world." The experiences of Mary Graffam, Harbord wrote, "have never been duplicated in the story of womankind."<sup>38</sup>

At Sivas, General Harbord detailed Lieutenant Colonel John P. Jackson and Majors Lawrence Martin and Haig Shekerjian to investigate conditions between Sivas and Samsun and along the Black Sea to Trebizon.<sup>39</sup> In his subsequent accounting, Jackson described the rugged terrain up to Marsovan, where a series of fertile plains extended as far as Samsun. He noted that in one destroyed Armenian village, a few people had returned

<sup>37</sup> James G. Harbord, "Investigating Turkey and Trans-Caucasia," *World's Work* 40 (June 1920): 185-88.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 189-90; RG 256, 184.021/96. See also FO 608/113, 386/1/16/19040, jacket 49b encl., July 16, 1919; *Missionary Herald* 116 (April 1920): 169-72.

<sup>39</sup> RG 256, 184.021/275.



Route of the American Military Mission to Armenia, 1919

but "they were unable to get work or credit and were in a state of abject destitution" even though a large harvest was being threshed. The Armenians were fearful of new massacres, and as the American officers approached Marsovan they saw many survivors making preparations to leave at the earliest possible moment for the port of Samsun. In Marsovan, Dr. George White, who had returned to the city as an American Near East Relief officer and reopened Anatolia College, reported to them that of the 40,000 Armenians in the region in 1914, about 10,000 remained alive. Of the 14,000 Armenians in Marsovan city, 1,100 prominent businessmen, doctors, and able-bodied men had been taken out of the city in batches of 250 at a time and killed outright, after which the general deportations and massacres had begun. No more than 1,000 had escaped death by converting to Islam or through other means. White warned that the present conditions were very much like those that had existed on the eve of the wartime deportations and massacres. He and his staff, together with local Armenian and Greek leaders, viewed the Turkish "Independent Government Movement" as nothing more than the resumption of power of the Committee of Union and Progress and of the very Young Turk culprits who had committed the atrocities. Armenian survivors were being threatened and cajoled to embrace Islam as the only way to save themselves.<sup>40</sup>

As the main body of the Harbord mission traveled eastward over the Armenian Plateau toward Erzinjan and Erzerum, an Armenian representative in the town of Sushehri near Shabin-Karahisar was bold enough to state in the presence of Turkish officials that very few Armenians had been able to reclaim their properties and that virtually all the surviving Armenian orphans and young girls in the district were still being held in Turkish harems.<sup>41</sup>

On September 25, the mission crossed over the old Russo-Turkish boundary and spent the next week in the small de facto Armenian republic. In Erevan, the provisional capital, Prime

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<sup>40</sup> RG 256, 184.021/317. See also George E. White, *Adventuring with Anatolia College* (Grinnell, IA: Herald-Register Publ. Co., 1940), pp. 91-101.

<sup>41</sup> RG 256, 184.021/324.

Minister Alexandre Khatisian, whom Harbord described as a “very polished gentleman,” reiterated the case for a united Armenian state that included all of the Ottoman Armenian provinces, including Sebastia, and direct outlets to the sea. He deplored the delays in repatriating the thousands of Armenian refugees in the Caucasus and the inability of those who had ventured back to regain their goods and properties. Khatisian dismissed as deception Mustafa Kemal’s assertion that he was not ill-disposed toward the Christian population.<sup>42</sup>

The American Military Mission to Armenia left Armenia on October 2 and began its return sea voyage from Batum five days later. Having in hand the reports of Colonel Jackson and other officers regarding the precarious circumstances of surviving and returning Armenians in the Sivas region and elsewhere, General Harbord dispatched a letter to Mustafa Kemal from Samsun in which he acknowledged receipt of a copy of the Turkish Nationalist program and expressed concern about the continued difficulties encountered by Armenian survivors. He diplomatically admonished the Turkish general: “I again invite your attention to the keen interest America has in the safety and welfare of these people . . . and suggest a wider circulation of the information that your organization is in no way inimical to the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire, as I understand from you to be the case.”<sup>43</sup>

When the Harbord mission arrived back in Constantinople, it was deluged by petitions from Armenian religious and civic leaders protesting that the Turkish Nationalist movement not only was taking in many Ittihadist criminals but also was adopting the Young Turk program to keep the Christians in virtual slavery as “chattel.” Unless the Americans stepped in to assume the mandate for Armenia, they warned, there would soon be no one or nothing left to save.<sup>44</sup>

As the American Military Mission to Armenia prepared to

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<sup>42</sup> Harbord, “Investigating Turkey and Trans-Caucasia” (July 1920): 273-76; Al. Khatisian, *Hayastani Hanrapetutian tsagumn u zargatsume* [The Creation and Development of the Republic of Armenia] (Athens: Nor Or, 1930), pp. 163-64.

<sup>43</sup> RG 256, 184.021/326.

<sup>44</sup> RG 256, 184.02101/5, exhibit B.

sail for home, there was much public speculation about what it would report. Rather than giving clear-cut recommendations, however, General Harbord listed corresponding points in favor and against American assumption of the Armenian mandate. Yet, reading between the lines, it was not difficult to detect strong sympathy for acceptance of the responsibility. Lieutenant Colonel Jasper Brinton, who wrote the report on government, stated: "This is the hour of crisis for Armenia. If she is to exist as a nation, preserving her institutions and developing her national existence, rather than to continue as a refugee and persecuted people, she must have the immediate support of a great power." The assistance being given to save the Armenians from starvation would be like "pouring water into a sieve" unless the United States established control over the area. William Cumberland, writing on finance, added: "The Armenians are entitled to a better lot than has been theirs in the past. A sense of fair play demands that they be no longer subjected to promiscuous massacre, deportation, abduction and plunder."

The officers who submitted reports on public health and sanitation, natural resources and agriculture, transport and communication, and the ethno-religious groups implied that world peace and the unequaled ability of the United States to deal with the disastrous Eastern Question warranted taking the bold plunge into the troubled region. Supervision should also be established over the whole of Anatolia and possibly over the Caucasus region as well. While there were advantages to drawing Armenia's boundary from the outset, most members thought it better to defer that question because of the decimation of the Armenian population and the hostility that such action would elicit among the Muslim elements. It would be better to draw permanent boundaries after sufficient time had been given for Armenian regeneration and an unraveling of the races through voluntary immigration and emigration.<sup>45</sup>

The American Military Mission to Armenia arrived back in the United States on November 11, exactly one year after the end of World War I. Its report was delivered to the White

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<sup>45</sup> The reports and suggestions of individual members of the mission are enclosed in RG 256, 184.021/329.

House the following day. Before listing the arguments for and against American assumption of the Armenian mandate, General Harbord did not conceal the fact that his mission had been deeply affected by the journey: "Mutilation, violation, torture, and death have left their haunting memories in a hundred beautiful Armenian valleys, and the traveler in that region is seldom free from the evidence of this most colossal crime of all the ages." Orphans and refugees were on the verge of starvation, towns and villages were in ruins, brigandage was rampant, and conditions "shriek of misery, ruin, starvation, and all the melancholy aftermath, not only of honorable warfare, but of bestial brutality, unrestrained by God or man." The only solution was for the entire expanse from Constantinople to the Caucasus to be placed under a single mandatory power, regardless of which country agreed to shoulder the burden. Only with the same power supervising the whole region could the ultimate boundaries of the constituent states be determined in a peaceful manner.<sup>46</sup>

Like the King-Crane report, the recommendations of the Harbord mission were kept from the public, fueling speculation that, since President Wilson seemed to favor the mandate, General Harbord had probably advised against American involvement. Although this was not the case, it did spur the opponents of Wilson to deliver him a sharp rebuke by refusing to ratify the German peace treaty, inclusive of the Covenant of the League of Nations. When the Senate finally maneuvered its way to vote on ratification of the Versailles treaty on November 19, the requisite two-thirds majority was lacking. Another attempt to win ratification in March 1920 resulted in renewed embarrassment and humiliation for Wilson. When Harbord's report was finally released to the Senate in the spring of 1920, opponents of the president and the mandate pounced on the negative arguments to turn them effectively against Woodrow Wilson and his sad Armenians.

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<sup>46</sup> *Conditions in the Near East: Report of the American Military Mission to Armenia*, Senate Document 166, 66th Cong., 2d sess. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), pp. 4-11 (pp. 25-28 for the fourteen arguments in favor of and the thirteen arguments against U.S. assumption of the Armenian mandate).

### *The Allied Retreat*

It was clear to the European Allies by the end of 1919 that the United States would play no further significant role in completing the treaties of peace with Germany's allies, including the Ottoman Empire. And already, the French and Italians were exploring options outside the peace conference. Sensing the ultimate success of Mustafa Kemal and his Nationalist movement, they initiated low-level exchanges with Kemal to determine what mutual concessions might be made. The most significant of these early contacts was the secretive mission of François Georges-Picot, coauthor of the wartime Entente pact about the partition of the Ottoman Asiatic provinces. Meeting with Mustafa Kemal in Sivas in December 1919, he implied that France might be prepared to make major concessions, including the restoration of Cilicia to Turkish sovereignty, in exchange for recognition of France's "special position," especially as related to investment and business opportunities, reorganization of the Turkish gendarmerie, and protection of minorities left under Turkish rule. Kemal responded adroitly that the recent Sivas congress had been amenable to foreign economic assistance and competent administrative advice but would in no way compromise the political and territorial integrity of the homeland, including Cilicia.<sup>47</sup> These furtive contacts would continue into 1920, even as the peacemakers proceeded with plans to impose a harsh peace on Turkey and as clashes occurred between French and Turkish armed forces in Marash and other locations in Cilicia.

Withdrawal of the United States from the peace process required British Foreign Secretary Curzon, who had favored a relatively large Armenian state, to accept the reality that Arme-

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<sup>47</sup> Roger de Gontaut-Biron, *Comment la France s'est installée en Syrie (1918-1919)* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1922), pp. 337-40; Karabekir, *Istiklal Harbimiz*, pp. 399-400; Ruben Sahakian, *Turk-Fransiakan haraberutiunne ev Kilikian, 1919-1921* tt. [Turko-French Relations and Cilicia, 1919-1921] (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1970), pp. 74-81; Hovannisian, *Republic of Armenia*, vol. 2, pp. 420-26; Paul C. Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres: The Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919-1920* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974), pp. 183-84.

nia would now have to be a "comparatively small affair." He informed the heads of the Armenian delegations, Boghos Nubar and Avetis Aharonian, that the most that could be hoped for would be the unification of the eastern provinces of Van, Bitlis, and Erzerum with the *de facto* Araratian republic. The French were less generous, maintaining that, because of the lack of American involvement, the new Armenia should reach only as far as the basin of Lake Van and the plain of Mush.<sup>48</sup>

These were the prevailing views when the European Allies gathered in London in February 1920 to deal with Turkish settlement. After duly criticizing the United States for the deplorable delays, Lord Curzon reviewed the principles to which the Allies were committed, including the detachment of the Arab provinces, establishment of an independent Armenian state, and protection of Christian minorities remaining in Turkey. It was clear, however, that in the absence of the United States it was no longer possible to award Armenia the regions of Sivas, Kharpert, and Diarbekir. The choice now was between a larger "lesser Armenia" and an even more compact territory without the fortress city of Erzerum. To study this question and make recommendations on the boundary between Armenia and Turkey, the conference appointed an "Armenia commission" with the understanding that Armenia would comprise the Araratian republic and "portions of the adjacent Turkish vilayets." Adequate guarantees for the protection of Armenians in Cilicia and those left in Turkey had also to be formulated.<sup>49</sup>

In their first appearance before the Armenia commission on February 21, Nubar and Aharonian stressed the strategic and commercial importance of Erzerum and the mountainous salient extending westward beyond Erzinjan and Kemakh. When asked

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<sup>48</sup> FO 371/4239, 1267432/521/44, and 371/4239, 167432/151671/44; Great Britain, Foreign Office, *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, 1st ser., ed. W.L. Woodward, Rohan Butler et al., 27 vols. (London: H.M.S.O., 1947-1986), vol. 4, pp. 942-56, cited hereafter as *British Documents*; Archives of the Armenian National Delegation, Minutes of Delegation of Integral Armenia, no. 59, Nov. 29, 1919; Avetis Aharonian, *Sardarapatits minchev Sevr ev Lozan (kaghakakan oragir)* [From Sardarabad to Sèvres and Lausanne (Political Diary)] (Boston: Hairenik, 1943), pp. 31-32.

<sup>49</sup> *British Documents*, vol. 7, pp. 81-87.

to trace the proposed boundary, the Armenian military attaché, General Gabriel Korganian, hesitantly drew a line on a map from the seacoast west of Trebizond at Tireboli southward to incorporate the sanjaks of Dersim and Kharpert in the vilayet of Mamuret ul-Aziz (Kharpert) before turning eastward along the Taurus Mountains to encompass most of the Bitlis and Van vilayets. The Armenian representatives had thereby tacitly acquiesced in the loss of most of Sebastia/Sivas.<sup>50</sup>

In a second meeting five days later, Nubar and Aharonian asserted that the Turkish authorities were manipulating population statistics by lumping various non-Turkish peoples into the general category of Muslim. In fact, Kurds, Kizilbash, Laz, Zaza, Yezidis, and other such groups had little in common with the Turks and were antipathetic to them. In arguing that Armenians could quickly become a majority in the new state with the immigration there of the dispersed survivors and the communities in Russia and the broader Diaspora, the Armenian delegation again showed that it was no longer adamant about three of the six Turkish Armenian provinces. Among the 800,000 persons from various colonies who would immediately move to Armenia were listed 100,000 survivors in the Turkish interior, "primarily from Sivas, Kharpert, and Diarbekir."<sup>51</sup>

The report submitted by the Armenia commission to the London conference on February 27 stated that, although it was desirable to give the Armenians as much territory as possible, their wartime decimation necessitated the formation of a smaller state where they could quickly become the predominant element. There should be a broad demilitarized zone between Turkey and Armenia, whose boundary, it was suggested, should run from the juncture of the Trebizond and Erzerum vilayets into Bitlis vilayet, taking in the plain of Mush, the Sasun highlands, and

<sup>50</sup> On the Armenia commission, see Hovannisian, *Republic of Armenia*, vol. 3, pp. 24-30; FO 371/4952-4953, E553/E708/E1216/134/58; Aharonian, *Sardarapatits minchev Sevr ev Lozan*, pp. 39-40, 44-46; Rep. of Arm. Del. Archives, File 133/32, *H.H. Pavirakutiuu, 1920 t.: Sahmanneri khndire* [R(epublic) of A(rmenia) Delegation Archives, 1920: The Boundary Question].

<sup>51</sup> Aharonian, *Sardarapatits minchev Sevr ev Lozan*, pp. 47-51; Rep. of Arm. Del. Archives, File 133/32, Korganian's report no. 17, March 19, 1920; FO 371/4952, E708/134/58.

the city of Bitlis, and skirting Lake Van as far as the Persian frontier. While the report recommended the inclusion of the city of Erzerum in Armenia, it also drew attention to the fact that the entire region was still occupied by Turkish armed forces and that the Allied Powers should take measures to remove these divisions or at least help the Armenian army to do so by supplying officers, instructors, and arms and munitions.<sup>52</sup> No final decision on the boundary had been taken when the London conference adjourned on April 10. The Allied leaders agreed to return to the question when deliberations resumed at the Italian resort of San Remo after the Easter holiday.

### *Reactions in the United States*

For the duration of the London conference, pro-Armenian groups in the United States clamored for action and denounced schemes to deprive the Armenians of their "legitimate territories" by excluding Cilicia and half of Turkish Armenia—Sivas, Kharpert, and Diarbekir. The American Committee for the Independence of Armenia, headed by former U.S. Ambassador to Germany James W. Gerard, led the charge against the European powers, which he accused of trying to apportion the Near East along the lines of the secret Entente pacts that had placed Cilicia and the three provinces in a French zone of influence. Gerard, whose flood of telegrams and communications bore the imprint of his assistant, Armenian American attorney Vahan Cardashian, dismissed arguments about Armenians being a minority as tantamount to putting "a premium on crime" by rewarding the perpetrators of the deportations and massacres. Armenia could not be trusted to the mercy of the Europeans, Gerard wrote his friends in the State Department. Active measures had to be taken to make it possible for the existing Armenian republic to draw in all the historic Armenian territories.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *British Documents*, vol. 7, pp. 268-69, 280-85; FO 371/4932, 1066/ 1/58, and FO 371/4953, E1123/E1457/134/58.

<sup>53</sup> Many of these messages are preserved in Rep. of Arm. Del. Archives, File 385/7, *H.H. Washingtoni Nerkayatsutschutin ev Amerikai Karavarutiune, 1920 t.* [R(epublic) of A(rmenia) Washington Representation and the American Govern-

On February 24, 1920, Gerard telegraphed Acting Secretary of State Frank L. Polk that the ACIA would hold an extraordinary meeting in New York the next day to consider the Armenian Question and inquired what the president's position was on the boundaries. The European powers, he added, should be put on notice that the United States would not stand for any sacrifice of Armenia's rights. In a message directly to Woodrow Wilson four days later, Gerard asked for decisive measures to prevent the carving up of Armenia along the lines of the secret treaties. Such a partition would confine Armenia to the land assigned to imperial Russia by the Sykes-Picot agreement, and it was quite conceivable that a revived Russia would one day again lay claim to that area. The ACIA kept up the pressure by organizing a mass meeting on March 15 attended by some of America's most prominent civic and religious leaders, who renewed the call for an independent Armenia stretching from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. On his part, Vahan Cardashian, in correspondence with Armenian leaders, voiced outrage that Armenian spokesmen seemed prepared to relinquish claims to Cilicia, Sivas, Kharpert, and Diarbekir.<sup>54</sup>

The stream of protests emanating from the ACIA offices in New York City discomfited the Wilson administration. Replying courteously and personally to one of Gerard's communications in late January, Frank Polk stated that the State Department had made it clear to the European Allies that the United States took a deep interest in "the Armenian situation," but he also added: "I think the great difficulty is that the Armenians are claiming so much more than is good for them." To another of Gerard's telegrams in February, Polk replied that while he had not been to the region, he had heard countless experts and delegations reach the conclusion "that we should try to create a small, compact Armenia with an access to one sea, and then, as far as the United States is concerned, pray for it, and also try by pressure of public opinion and by official pressure to get the European

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ment, 1920].

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., Gerard to Polk, Feb. 20, 29, March 16, 17, 1920; Gerard to President Wilson, Feb. 28, March 16, 1920; Cardashian to Manuk Hambardzumian, Jan. 28, 1920; Cardashian to Garegin Pasdermadjian, Jan. 30, 1920.

governments in some way to keep an eye on it.”<sup>55</sup>

During this critical period, European Armenophiles urged the United States to return to the peace conference to defend the interests of the Armenian people. That this matter had already become a dead issue was reaffirmed on March 19, 1920, when the U.S. Senate rejected for a second time ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, which included the enabling mechanism for the assumption of mandates. The next day, President Wilson declined a renewed Allied invitation to participate in completion of the Turkish treaty, yet on March 24 he forwarded his views through his new Secretary of State, Bainbridge Colby. The abiding interest of the United States in Armenia’s welfare was reiterated, as was the expectation of “the most liberal treatment of that unfortunate country.” Like the ACIA, Wilson only annoyed the European leaders further by his pontificating that the boundaries should be drawn “to recognize the legitimate claims of the Armenian people, and particularly to give them easy and unencumbered access to the sea.”<sup>56</sup>

### *The San Remo Conference and Armenia’s Boundaries*

The Allied Powers reconvened at San Remo on April 18, 1920, to complete the treaty of peace with Turkey, including the specific assignments to Great Britain and France of mandates in the Near East. As for Armenia, Prime Minister Lloyd George placed the blame on the United States for leaving no choice but to give the Armenians only those lands that they could occupy and administer without endangering the security of the entire state. In a memorandum prepared by the British Foreign Office, the Allies declared that they had allocated to Armenia territories “up to the maximum of her potentialities, if not up to the

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., Polk to Gerard, Feb. 18, 1920; US Archives, RG 59, 860J.01/215.

<sup>56</sup> Woodrow Wilson, *The Messages and Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Albert Shaw, vol. 2 (New York: Review of Reviews Corp., 1924), pp. 1183-87; United States, Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1920*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1936), vol. 3, pp. 750-53.

maximum of her claims or of their sympathies."<sup>57</sup> In discussions about the armed forces that would be needed to enforce the Turkish treaty, the Allied military experts reported that there was a shortfall of four divisions, but if the three divisions that would be required to remove the Turkish army from the Armenian provinces were subtracted from this figure then there would be sufficient strength to enforce all other aspects of the treaty. It followed then that the Armenians themselves would have to occupy the regions they were to be awarded. Arms and munitions might be made available, and hopefully the United States might still intervene to help.<sup>58</sup>

Against this prevailing background, intense exchanges took place between April 21 and 24 on whether or not to include the fortress city of Erzerum within the proposed Armenian state. The sessions were so charged that everything seemed on the verge of unraveling when David Lloyd George came up with a most convenient escape hatch. As the United States continued to express intense interest in the fate of Armenia and the Armenian people, the Allied leaders should respond by calling on President Wilson to shoulder the mandate for Armenia. Whether or not he was able to accept this call, he would also be asked to arbitrate the final boundary of Armenia within certain specified limits, namely the provinces of Trebizon, Erzerum, Bitlis, and Van.<sup>59</sup> In this manner, the European Allies could obviate the decision whether to assign Erzerum city to Armenia, and responsibility for any negative consequences could be shifted to the United States.

The resulting letter to Wilson on April 26 stated that a liberated Armenia had been one of the objectives for which the world war had been fought and that this goal had nowhere received such "eloquent expression" as in the speeches of the president himself. Therefore, the president was now being invited to assume a U.S. mandate over Armenia and, whatever the response to that request, to decide what parts of the Trebizon,

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<sup>57</sup> For deliberations and decisions on the Armenian Question at San Remo, see Hovannisian, *Republic of Armenia*, vol. 3, pp. 70-112.

<sup>58</sup> *British Documents*, vol. 8, pp. 54-60, 61-63, 66-67.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 177-78, vol. 8, pp. 89-92, 107-17.

Erzerum, Bitlis, and Van vilayets could be properly and safely added to the existing state at Erevan and what access to the sea could be provided to ensure a self-sufficient Armenian national existence.<sup>60</sup> Hence, while Wilson could assign more territory to Armenia than the Allies were willing to sanction, the prescribed limits would not allow him to award any part of Cilicia or of the vilayets of Sivas, Kharpert, or Diarbekir.

Woodrow Wilson, to the surprise of many observers, replied on May 17 that, while he could not act on the mandate without Congressional approval, he did accept the request to arbitrate the Armeno-Turkish boundary.<sup>61</sup> Then a week later, against the counsel of his political advisers, he asked Congress for authority to assume the mandate for Armenia. There was no doubt whatsoever that any possibility of an American mandate over Armenia had long passed and that submission of such a request at this juncture would result in further humiliation of both the president and the Armenian people. Yet Woodrow Wilson persisted. The Senate's rebuke was quick in coming on June 1 with a resounding vote to "respectfully decline" the request.<sup>62</sup>

There still remained the issue of the boundary. Not until July did the Department of State appoint a commission for that purpose and not until after the Turkish treaty was signed at Sèvres on August 10 (including a provision binding the Armenian and Turkish governments to accept the U.S. president's ultimate boundary decision) did that body begin its work. In its recommendations submitted on September 28, the commission noted that there was strong pressure to include certain territories outside the four specified provinces, especially in Kharpert. That area was a salient of Greater Armenia and was distinct from Sivas and Lesser Armenia, which lay to the west of the Euphrates River. The commission had no jurisdiction to deal with that

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<sup>60</sup> *Foreign Relations, 1920*, vol. 3, pp. 779-81; *British Documents*, vol. 8, pp. 217-19.

<sup>61</sup> *Foreign Relations, 1920*, vol. 3, p. 783; FO 371/5107, E5227/56/44, encl.

<sup>62</sup> James B. Gidney, *A Mandate for Armenia* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1967), pp. 222-39; Hovannisian, *Republic of Armenia*, vol. 4, pp. 10-24. For the Congressional debates, see *Congressional Record*, vol. 59, pt. 8 (1920), pp. 7875-90, 7914-20, 7960-62, 7964-71, 8051-73.



Wilsonian Armenia."

vilayet but suggested that some minor adjustments might be considered in the future. The territory being assigned to Armenia was less than half of that originally claimed by Armenian spokesmen, but the commission believed it had allocated as much of the four provinces as conformed with the strategic, economic, and demographic well-being of the new country. Thus, the Republic of Armenia was being awarded most of the vilayet of Trebizond as far west as Tireboli, of Erzerum as far west as Erzinjan, and of Bitlis and of Van as far south as the Taurus Mountains.<sup>63</sup>

### *End of the Mirage*

By the time the boundary decision of "Wilsonian Armenia" was forwarded to Paris at the end of November 1920, it had become irrelevant to all except those who possessed an exceptional sense of history or posterity. No longer could there be a question of how much of Turkish or Western Armenia would be added to the existing Araratian republic. A more pressing consideration had become whether even that small landlocked state would be spared permanent Turkish occupation. Already, as the boundary commission submitted its report in late September, Mustafa Kemal's armed forces were striking across the prewar Russo-Turkish frontier to invade the Armenian republic and thereby nullify the Treaty of Sèvres and everything for which it stood. Within six weeks the army corps commanded by General Kiazim Karabekir had captured Sarikamish, Kars, Ardahan, and Alexandropol (Leninakan; Gumri) and was advancing on Erevan itself.

Under these circumstances the prostrated Armenian government, in the hope of salvaging whatever possible from final ruin, had no choice but to submit to the pressure of Soviet Russia (which was secretly supporting Kemal with gold and weapons) to transfer power to an Armenian Soviet republic. Among the terms of the resultant treaty in December 1920 was Soviet Russia's pledge that it would restore the boundaries of

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<sup>63</sup> For work and report of boundary commission, see US Archives, RG 59, File 670J.6715.

Armenia as they had been prior to the Turkish invasion. As it happened, however, the Soviet authorities soon declared the treaty to be null and void. Thus, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic became confined to scarcely half of Russian Armenia, while the other half (including Mount Ararat) as well as all of Turkish Armenia passed under the firm control of the Turkish Nationalist forces. The momentous Turkish victory and attendant rewards would be fully recognized by the Allied Powers, which made their peace with Mustafa Kemal in 1923 through the Treaty of Lausanne. "Wilsonian Armenia," together with Sivas and the other areas left outside that envisioned state, were enfolded into the Republic of Turkey.

In Sivas, the death of Mary Graffam in August 1921 added to the sense of foreboding among the several thousand remaining Armenians for whom conditions became increasingly precarious. The lawless irregular band of Topal Osman ran roughshod over the Armenian towns and villages, murdering, raping, looting, and burning. And for their part, the Kemalist authorities clamped tight restrictions on the Armenians and their American guardians, closing Anatolia College in Marsovan and forcing Dr. White and his staff to leave.<sup>64</sup> As the Nationalist forces turned the tide of battle against the Greek army in Anatolia in 1922, most Armenian survivors in Sivas fled over Amasia to Samsun to seek passage away from the troubled region. At the same time, the Near East Relief personnel throughout the provinces of Sivas and Kharpert were pressured to leave for Aleppo, taking with them the Armenian orphans and widows in their charge. The process of national cleansing was entering its final stages.

In 1925, there reportedly were around 3,000 Armenians left in the vicinity of Sivas, and by 1929 the number of persons who still identified as being Armenian had fallen to 1,200. A few hundred more continued to subsist in and around Zara, Divrig, Gurun, Kangal, Darende, and several of the villages, but over the years even these stragglers gave up and moved to Istanbul or across the border into Syria. Armenian homes, fields,

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<sup>64</sup> Patrik, *Patmagirk-hushamatian Sebastioy*, pp. 43-44; White, *Adventuring with Anatolia College*, pp. 105-10.

and businesses passed to new owners, and Armenian churches and monasteries were either left in disrepair, demolished, or converted to mosques. The elimination of the Armenians of Sebastia was effectively symbolized when in 1980 the military authorities of the Republic of Turkey razed the Monastery of Surb Nshan—the Holy Cross.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Patrik, *Patmagirk-hushamatian Sebastioy*, pp. 38-39.